

Radical Middle Way Transcripts

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from Protest to Engagement



**Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah on:
“From Protest to Engagement”**

[Opening Du'ā']

In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate. All Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds and blessing and peace be upon our Messenger Muhammad (saw) until the day of the rising.

We meet after a year since our last meeting in this town. And we thank Allah for prolonging our lives so we can meet again. The concerns of the British Muslims today are many. May my speech answer some of the questions that are on people's tongues and that people speak about amongst themselves. All I want is to congratulate you, and to say there are glad tidings for those of you who are working here; those of you doing good works and those of you who are steadfast in doing their good works; in a place where you do not find assistance. The Prophet of Allah (saw) spoke of a people who have the reward of seventy Muslims, and when the Companions of the Prophet of Allah asked him *'Oh Messenger of Allah, do you mean seventy of us, or seventy of them?'* And the Messenger of Allah said *'Nay, they have the reward of seventy of you because they work in a place where there are none to assist (them).'*

The first challenge of us living here is that of holding fast onto their faith. It is a time of confusion when there are many conflicting opinions being thrown around. And the Prophet (saw) said *'there will come upon a people, a day when a man will wake up clement with his composure intact and will go to sleep totally bewildered.'* It's a time of conflicting ideas, contradictory opinions which reach out to all of us because of the globalization and the global village which we all live. But what is it that each person presents and what is it we have to present to people? How do we keep our Islām and our faith intact? Our *Imān* intact? How do we keep our house intact? How do we become like the house of *Loot* when the angels of the All mighty went back into the divine presence and said there is one house of believers amongst them, the house of Lūt? How is it we can ensure our house is like that house? So that if even everyone else had turned away from the truth, our house would be the house that had established the truth.

The other challenge is how we find the group of people who remind us of God; a group of people with whom we can gather and pray in a state of serenity; a group of people who can help us in order that we can ensure that we sacrifice our meat in the way that is proper to us. A group of people that can help us in gathering donations in order so that we can extend the hand of assistance to people in need; be they believers or non-Muslims, because a Muslim is supposed to help those of any faith and any creed. A Muslim is supposed to help the needy where ever they may be. The challenge is how you live in your surroundings and those around you.

To overcome this challenge, one requires knowledge. Because co-existence is based on knowledge and it's an art in itself. Allah commands us to be fair. To have *qisd*. One of the scholars of Andalusia; Qādī bin Bakr Ibn 'Arabī, said that *qisd*, fairness, in the verse when Allah commanded us to have *qisd* doesn't mean just justice. *Qisd* means to share of your wealth with them, with all of the people, be they Muslims or non Muslims. Because justice is implicit in their faith anyway. But *qisd* entails that we give, share our wealth to those in need, be they Muslims or non-Muslims.

Knowledge gives us the ability to present our faith well and to present it correctly. Allah commands us to *'debate with them that which is best'*. Not with that which is

good, but that which is *best*. The five pillars of our faith require knowledge to establish them. How do you pray? How do you wash, how do you do Hajj if you can. How do you fast, what's expected of you in regards to the alms due? All of this requires knowledge. And if you find yourself in a state where with the challenges that surround you, you can keep your faith in tact and you cannot pass it onto your kids then you see a day that will come when you will pass away and there will be no one to inherit this great inheritance that you took from your ancestors or from those before you. Then to leave these lands will be better for you; in order to save the souls of your children. And this is something that we all agree upon. But the Prophet of Allah (saw) said this is a challenge that we have to overcome, in order to ensure that those behind us can inherit this legacy and this trust that God has passed onto us. The Prophet of Allah (saw) said *'Worship Allah where ever you may be. And follow a sin with a good deed in order that it will be an expiation and wipe it out, and show people good character and good character is the Qur'ān'*. For the Prophet, (saw) was the Qur'ān walking. And Allah says, *'Say good things to the people.'* You should be in such a state that before you speak the light of the reality that you carry touches people. Allah says in the Qur'ān, *'Its light illumines (illuminates) even though the flame touch it not.'*

And some of the *mufasssirūn* said that this is the Prophet of Allah because even before he spoke, the illumination of what he carried was seen in his state and in his composure and everything he did (saw) .

The Prophet (saw) said to a man, *'Do not be angry. Do not be angry. Do not be angry'*. And he also told us *'If you are in a state of anger sit down. And if the state of anger doesn't go if you're sitting, lay down. And if you can't put the fire of your anger out, washing (wash) yourself, by doing ablution'*. We should be people that show good character to other people. This is the character of the people that came before us, and nothing should have changed this should be the character that we carry on. We need to live this character my brothers and sister in order that we can carry this trust that we have been given. And we need to live this character so we can get to a point where we can speak like Seyyidunā Yūsuf (as) spoke when he said to them, the king of Egypt; let me be the trustee of the treasuries of the earth. Because I have establishment and someone who is trustworthy. And this, as the Prophet (saw), why was Seyyidunā Yusuf ask him for this, where as the Prophet of Allah (saw) said Yusuf the noble, the son of a noble, the son of a noble, the son of a noble. Meaning Yusuf was a Prophet with three generation of Prophecy before him. Yūsuf, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac the son of Abraham. He was seeking this, he was asking for this because he knew he had the prerequisite trust worthiness and the ability to carry out this trust whereas another man put in that same position of trust might not be able to do it and may falter.

My brothers and sisters we need to live with the people. And we need to learn how. How then do we live with the people?

To actualize all of this we need for the Muslims to have a practical programme here; one which overcomes the negativities by being positive in their worldly religious affairs. The first thing we need to do is leave our differences. Wherever the Muslims went in the World, circumstances that surrounded them needed for them to look at ways of facing those challenges and therefore different opinions were made.

Some of us have come from different locals to one point. And we've carried these differences but we have made them into a baggage that we bring with us. And something that is not as it should be, praiseworthy. This has become an obstacle to us working together. With people busying themselves, disparaging each other, putting down others because they have different opinions. In the Qur'ān, when Allah tells us that we should not back bite each other. And asks us is one of you content with eating the flesh of his brother. These differences should not be a cause of conflict. This does not mean that we do not have different schools of thought, *mathāhib* and jurisprudence, but what it means, is that this difference, which in reality is praiseworthy. Should not be turned to something which causes us to fall into conflict with each other. And to bring dissidence into our communities.

When coming up here today, we travelled up by train. The rains were all going in different direction to different locations, but on the same tracks. Not one of the trains collided. So there was a harmony between them and in the way intersected and in the way they passed each other.

Imām Al-Shāfi'ī (ra) said our differences can be a source of strength. And Allah says in the Qur'ān, *'Between the seas there is an inner space, the two seas do not mix and between them there is an inner space'*. Meaning the salt and the fresh water do not mix and between them is an inner space. And this inner space should be the love between us, which is the bonding thing between our differences.

The differences that are agreed upon in our community are praise worthy. And these differences should not make us forget our sense of brother hood. Our organizations, at the same time trying to face the challenges that face our community and at the same time build bridges outside, should also build bridges between themselves. Despite of their differences, despite of the different outlooks, and the way they see things should be done.

Ibn Quaiym (ra) said, *'Our differences (the praiseworthy differences, the agreed upon differences) are based on the different narrations which reached us from the Prophet (saw) and the different understanding of the companions of (saw)'*. The Prophet of Allah (saw) told us to desist from disparaging each other, from putting each other down, from talking badly of one and another. And the Prophet (saw) said *'imān is here, imān is here, imān is here.'*

But the differences which lead us to have animosity towards one another are un-praiseworthy. Now after coming beyond this point and understanding we need to work together and be united together and understand that the differences we have with each other are differences which come from the same source and differences which are praiseworthy, differences which are agreed upon we also need to understand that we are citizens of these countries. And we are citizens of this land. And as citizens of this land, we need to have loyalty to this land. And loyalty to this land is not something that this *dīn* tells us to desist from, but rather is something that this *dīn* encourages us to do.

To have *bir* as Allah commands us, is to show goodness. The Prophet of Allah (saw) was approached by one of his female companions and she asked him how she should deal with her mother, because her mother was from outside the Muslim community. The Prophet of Allah commanded her or informed that she should keep the ties of

kinship with her mother. The sense of loyalty that one has to the land, the sense that one has to his fellow citizens will naturally make the hearts of his fellow citizens inclined towards those of us who understand; we don't want to take this country over. What we want to do in this country is mutually co-exist; in a state of tolerance and peace with one another. And what I always say to the Muslims in the different countries of Europe when they ask me whether we should be with the Liberals, with the Conservatives, or with Labour, is that we should work with all organizations with all parties in trying to make the lot of the communities that we live in with, as citizens, with common challenges, with common goals, we should work with all of the different institutions of these communities. The Prophet of Allah Ya'cūb (Jacob) may Allah have peace and blessing on him, advised his sons, when they were going to Egypt and said each of you enter through a different door. And like wise each of us should enter through a different door. The Prophet of Allah said, *'wherever you find good, stay.'* And the Prophet (saw) said, the land is the land of God, and the servants are God's servants.

And Allah says to us, *'And co-operate with each other with goodness, and God-fearingness or awareness of God and do not cooperate with each other in sin and that which brings animosity between you- that which brings dissidence amongst you.'* All of this requires *fiqh*. This is the ease that the *shari'ah* came with and the Prophet (saw) was described in the Qur'ān as someone who brings peace to people and it is said in the Qur'ān the description of the Prophet in the previous books, is that he will bring peace to his community.

Imām Al-Kātib Al-Baghdādī, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the scholars of the community need to show mercy to the community.

The time is upon us so I would like to conclude by giving you some advice. The first advice is that to improve your link with God; your relation with God. So that you die as one who has a strong link with his Creator. Allah says, narrating the advice of one of His prophets; and do not die, except as people of Islām. Do not die except as Muslims, meaning people who submit themselves to God. Advise your Son and Families and enjoin upon them to also have a state with their maker. God praised his prophet Ismail, because the Prophet Ismail, enjoined upon his family worship and goodness. And he said his Lord was pleased with him.

It's not enough to say I worship God and I am in a good state, and everybody else's responsibility is on their shoulder. Take it upon yourself and enjoin it on the others around you. Show goodness to your neighbor and be responsible to your neighbour. Let the society as a whole extend this goodness to the society as a whole so that they may see the reality of what a Muslim is. In you, a Muslim, as the Prophet of God said, *'A person whom from his tongue and from his hands, the people are safe.'* May Allah give us success in doing this.

And May Allah bless all of our efforts, In shā'Allah.

May Allah bless you, and Al-salāmu 'alaykum.

About Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah

Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah is one of Islam's greatest living jurist. An extremely well-known and well-respected scholar, he is considered a "scholars' scholar" since many of his students are actually considered ulama in their own right. Shaykh Abdullah grew up in one of the eastern provinces of the West African nation of Mauritania. From a very young age, he showed extreme gifts intellectually and a profound ability to absorb a lot of information and a lot of the text. During his studies, he memorised an extraordinary number of texts. Then, at a very early age, he was appointed with a group of people to study legal judgements in Tunis and went there for a period of time. When he returned to Mauritania, he became a minister of education and later, a minister of justice. He was also one of the vice-presidents of the first president of Mauritania. However, due to the conditions in Mauritania and the military change of governments that took place, he began to teach, and he ended up going to Saudi Arabia and becoming a distinguished professor at The University of Usul al-Fiqh.

The shaykh is presently involved in several organizations in the Muslim world, such as the organisation which is known as Al Majma' al-Fiqhi, which is comprised of a body of scholars that come together from all over the Muslim world and from all the different madhhabs and different viewpoints; they analyze and study a lot of the modern issues to come up with Islamic solutions to the issues confronting modern Muslims in the modern world. Shaykh Abdullah is also involved in writing. He has written several books and has delivered lectures all over the world. He has expertise in a lot of areas that have been unfortunately ignored by the vast amount of contemporary scholars. One of the areas of expertise that he has is in what is known as fiqh al-aqaliyaat which is the fiqh or juristic rulings related to Muslims living as a religious minority with a dominant alien territory. Because the Muslims tended to prefer hijra to countries where Muslims were the majority, there are not a lot of scholars that work in the area of dealing with how Muslims in minority areas should actually live their lives and how they should behave when confronted with issues that often are in contradistinction to their deen.

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